

WHAT'S WRONG WITH AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY ?

For an amateur "arm-chair diplomat" to imply that something is wrong with American Foreign Policy is surely insolent presumptuousness, the more so as he certainly has little or no access to the mass of secret and confidential information which determines foreign policy. However, the man in the street, with his matter of fact, down-to-earth philosophy, cannot escape the conclusion that America won both World Wars and lost the Peace each time. He wonders why American diplomats are often out-maneuvered and out-smarted at the conference table, little realizing that his attitude may well be a contributing factor that shackles their hands.

There is, however, a more authoritative source concerning this failure of American Foreign Policy. None other than former Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, returning from a European trip on September 28, 1954, told reporters: "What is commonly called anti-americanism over there..... is due to lack of confidence in American diplomatic leadership under both the Republican and Democratic administrations". Ambassador Kennedy has unerringly put his finger on the weak spot, even should some accuse him of over-simplification.

The problem of foreign policy is so complex, involved and fast-changing that a quick study can only touch some of the high spots and must necessarily seem and even prove sketchy and superficial. To

save time and space, constructive remedies will be spelled out or implied in each paragraph, after the discussion of the causes of failure. We must, however, keep in mind the peculiar features of the American Constitution, which complicate the task of our diplomats, and the powers, almost dictatorial, of the Executive, which permit presidents to override and reverse the decisions of the State Department (vide Yalta).

Our foreign policy, as it has been unfolding since the Second World War, seems to be built around the fact that the mantle of greatness, which once adorned the shoulders of the British, has descended on our unprepared and, at times, unwilling shoulders. We have reluctantly taken over Britain's role of World Policeman. To complicate matters, we have injected into the picture the assumption that our revolutionary past and traditions bid us fight colonialism everywhere and promote freedom, self-government and a higher standard of living for backward peoples all over the world. In our "boy scout" eagerness we do not pause to ask whether the people we want to free are ready for freedom, with tragic results as in Indonesia, among other instances.

To sum it up in one Biblical phrase, the cornerstone of our foreign policy is that we have appointed ourselves our "brother's keeper" globally. This policy is fraught with tremendous risks; we are gambling not only with our own future but with the future of modern civilization. Such a concept of our world responsibilities is pregnant with unsuspected possibilities for good - or for evil!

To ensure that we enlist all the elements of success on our

side, let us examine who or what appointed us our "brother's keeper" and how best we can discharge this mission. We may as well dismiss right away the assumption that Divine Providence so appointed us, or that other nations asked us to act in this capacity.

(a) If the adoption of this policy is predicated on the well-meaning, charitable urge of our bleeding-heart internationalists to better and improve the lot of the common man all over the world, we should examine the implications of such a policy, its cost, its practicability, its effectiveness for containing communism (as most of its protagonists claim), and its moral and political effects on the nations thus helped.

It is axiomatic that friendship cannot be purchased; it has to be earned. With our largesses we are buying toadies and sycophants, not trustworthy friends who will stand by us in our hour of need. Moreover, we now hear in more and more countries the time-honored phrase: "Beware of Americans bearing gifts".

This phase of our foreign policy is thoroughly disliked, despised and mistrusted by the people we are trying to help, even when they accept such help. They cannot believe, and they brand as mealy-mouthed hypocrisy, our well-meaning, if ingenious, assurances that we have no ulterior motives and are trying to help them for their own sakes only. This has repeatedly been told to me by top policy makers in some countries who could afford to speak to me candidly, considering me one of themselves.

Furthermore, it is well to remember the profound Moslem saying: "Beware of the resentment of him towards whom you have been charitable".

(b) However, if it is the irresistible forward sweep of history and the urgent need for self-preservation arising therefrom, that have motivated and must dictate and fashion our foreign policy (and I believe most thoughtful Americans will so agree), then let us face this fact squarely and honestly without seeking any excuses or self-justification.

We Americans do not hold a monopoly on intelligent, clear-thinking, foresighted citizens; those who have these characteristics in other nations have no difficulty in recognizing that self-preservation must, and should, dictate our foreign policy. If we can convince them that our enlightened selfish wish for the survival of the highest type of civilization we all enjoy coincides and merges with their self-interest, we will earn their respect and their trustful cooperation; we will be speaking a language they understand and appreciate.

Since our foreign policy must rest on the premise that we are our "brother's keeper", it would be useful to examine some of the pitfalls confronting such a policy and how to side-step them.

(1) The greatest danger stems from the well-meaning, if muddled, dyed-in-the-wool liberals who disapprove of the forms of certain governments with whom we have to deal. They would like to change these governments to conform to their simon-pure concepts of democratic governments. This tendency to try and fashion foreign governments into the image of our own, by meddling or pressure, can have dangerous repercussions, not only on our foreign policy but on our ultimate safety.

(2) We must also explode the myth of "grateful nations". Most nations will adopt a policy only if it promotes their interests, immediate

or long range. Few nations will sacrifice or subordinate their interests to those of another nation out of gratitude.

(3) Since some of our objectives or interests are bound to clash with those of our allies, we should be willing to negotiate with them on the basis of limited or even individual objectives and issues. An ideological approach, asking them to sacrifice national aspirations out of gratitude for what we have done for them or trying to make them more democratic, will only antagonize them and will lead to no solid understanding.

(4) Both major political parties must at long last realize that internal politics cannot be exported and injected into foreign policy. This means that both parties must reach an understanding to stop catering for, and subordinating foreign policy to, minority votes, be they Jewish, Irish or Italian, Labor or Farm votes. A strictly bi-partisan policy may lose an election or two, but the alternative is loss of our souls and loss of America.

(5) Secretary Dulles' announcement of a "policy of massive retaliation" was the first ray of hope since the shameful sell-out at Yalta. Unluckily, it has been whittled down and hedged around with so many exceptions and restrictions that it has practically lost its effectiveness. And yet, it is the only language that humanity will understand and respect; it is the only insurance against another world war. The Moslems, paraphrasing Napoleon's famous dictum, say: "God is on the side of the strongest religion".

(6) To be effective "massive retaliation" must not be based on bluster and weakness, but on real, confident, self-assured strength. What are the minimum requirements for our self-preservation? How can they

be translated in terms of general foreign policy?

(7) Part of the lack of confidence of our partners is due to the lack of continuity in American Foreign Policy; we blow hot one day, cold the next, often according to the exigencies of domestic politics. We, therefore, must determine how definite and fixed our policies can or should become, to insure the confidence of our partners, but without freezing our policy to the point of saddling ourselves with inflexible shibboleths that might endanger our security. We must study ways to improve and insure continuity in our major foreign policies, if necessary through a bi-partisan approach, keeping in mind that contradictory or continually shifting and changing policies are a short-cut to war (vide Acheson's declaration re Korea which practically sparked the Korean War).

(8) How far can we interfere in the internal affairs of our partners, when such affairs tend to endanger our security? And when we do interfere, how much of the responsibility for such interference should we be willing to assume?

(9) We must realize that patience and time are often the ingredients that make for the success of an evolutionary foreign policy. As a young nation we are only too prone to be impatient, forgetting that we are dealing with old nations who count time in generations or centuries, not days and months. Our eager beavers might do well to ponder Kipling's "here lies the fool who tried to hustle the East".

(10) It would be healthy to keep in mind that the foreign offices of other nations have diplomats as smart and as experienced as ours,

if less starry-eyed. Some of these foreign diplomats could, to quote the Oriental proverb, "take some of our diplomats to a cool spring and bring them back thirsty".

(11) The fundamental fact we must never lose sight of is the cost of this, our "brother's keeper" program. What good would it do us or the world if, in the process of improving the lot of the common man all over the globe, we bankrupt America?

To sum up: The lack, so far, of a realistic foreign policy, based on an objective, down-to-earth, facing of the facts of international life, has caused us time and again to throw away the fruits of victory and to commit unpardonable and disastrous blunders in the Far East, Indonesia, the Middle East, and Europe. We have successfully pulled off the "tour de force" of antagonizing both parties in many of the disputes in which we have stepped in as honest broker.

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